



An informa=

tion and Petition agaynst the oppressours
of the poore Commons of this Realme, compiz
led and Imprinted for this onely purpose
that amongst them that haue to doe
in the Parliamente, some godlye
mynded men, may herat take
occcasion to speake more in
the matter then the Au-
thoure was able to
write. * 

 Clape. I will.

 When you shal see none oppression to bee
amongest you, and leaue of youre idle talker
then shal you cal vpon the Lord and he
shal hear you, you shal crye, and he
shal say, Behold I am at hand.

FH

MVSEVM
BRITANNICVM

TO the moſte honorable Lords of the Par
liament wyth the cōmones of the
ſame: theyꝝ moſte humble and
dayely Oratoure Roberte
Crowley, wytheth the
aſſiſtence of Gods
holy ſpirite.

AMonge the many fold & moſte
weyghy mattiers (moſte wor-
thy counſaylours) to be deba-
ted and cōmuned of in this pre-
ſent parliament, and by the ad-
uiſe, aſſent and conſēt therof,
ſpedily to be redreſſed: I thynke ther is no one
thyng more nedfull to be ſpoken of, then the
great oppreſſion of the pore communes, by the
poſſeſſioners as wel of Clergie as of p̄ Laitie.
No doubt it is nedfull, and ther ought to bee a
ſpedy redreſſe of many mattiers of religion: as
are theſe. The uſe of the ſacraments and cere-
monies, the uſurpyng of tithes to priuate cō-
moditie, the ſuperfluouſe, vnlearned, vndiſcret,
and victiouſe miniſters of the church, and their
ſuperſtitious and Idolatrous adminiſtraci-
ons. Of theſe thynges I ſaye ought ther to be
a ſpedy reformatiō. For they are now moſt lyk
haſtely to brynge vppon thys noble realme, the
inevitable vengeance of God, if they bee not
ſhortly reformed: for aſmuch as it hath plea-
ſed the almyghty and lvyng God, to open vñ
to vs thoſe abhominations, whych haue hère-
tofore ben kept ſecret and hyd from vs.
Theſe thynges, I ſay, ar yet far out of ioynt,
and had great nede to be reformed.

For notwithstanding theſe thynges manifeſtes

To the most christia affeble
late visitacion: the ignorant people, whoe haue
longe ben fostred and brought vp in the super-
sticion and wronge beleue of these thynges,
and are yet nodout, secretly instructed by their
blinde guydes and by the holden styl in blynd-
nes: wyl not be perswaded þ theyr forfathers
supersticion was not the true fayth of Christ,
yl such tyme as they haue continuynge among
them, such preachers as shall be able and wyl,
by the manifeste scriptures proue vnto them þ
both they & their fathers wer deceiued & knewe
not howe to worship God aright, but shæfullt
seduced by the couctyse of the shepherdes and
guydes: sought hym wher he was not, & when
they thought they had ben most hygh in his fa-
uour by doing hym such honor as they thought
moste acceptable in hys syght: then committed
they most detestable blasfemie, and wer abhor-
minable before hym.

Thys knowlege, I say, wyl not be bea-
ten into the heads of the ignorante: so longe as
theyr shepherdes be but hylynges and folowe
lynges, for such minister not to the cōgrega-
tion: but to theyr owne bealpes. They are not
shepherdes, but butchers. They come not to
feede, but to be fed. And doubtles (moste christe
cōsailours) I thinke it not possible to amēde
this great enormitie, other wise then by reduce-
ynge the order of chosynge of the ministers,
vnto the order that was in þ primitive church
wherof is mēcioned in the Act. of the Apostles.
For so long as ydle bealpes may come to the bi-
shope and be smered for money, God shall saye
to the by his prophet. You did rene but I sent
you not. They shall be called feedars, of feed-
ynge

Actu. 7.

Iere. 23.

Of the parliament,
ynge them selues and not of fedynge the flock.
They shall studie to please men & not to please
God. In fine, they shall differ nothyng from
the craftes men whiche applye an occupacion
to get theyr lyuynge vppon, and not to the in-
tent to profite the common weale.

The craftes man sueth for the freedom of
a Citie, not because he intendeth to be a main-
tainer of the Citie: but because he hopeth that
he shall lyue so muche the more welthily hym
selfe. And euen for lyk causes do our ministers
and are lyk styll to do (so longe as they maye
bee receyued when they come vncaled) applye
them selues to priestynge, because they lyke wel
the ydlenes of the lyfe.

I doubt not but the Kynges maiesties vi-
sitters knowe more of thys matter then I can
be able to wyttte. And by them, I doubte not,
you shall bee moued to commone of thys mat-
ter at the full.

The sacramentes they styll abuse, vseing
them as matters of merchaundyce, and chiefly
the most worthy memorie of our redemptiō, for
that they selle boethe to the guycke and to the
deade, to the ryche and to the poore. None shall
receyue it at theyr handes, wythout he wyl
paye the ordinarie shotte, and so are they redy
to serue every man. They loke vppō the monie
onely and nothyng vppon the mynde. Whe-
ther it be taken to cōfort of consciēce or iudge-
mēt, they pas not. They tel he monie, they loke
for nomore. If they wyl deny this to bee true:
let them saye why they suffer the poore to begge
money to paye for theyr housel, as they call it.
Perchaunce they wyl answer that the money

To the most christia assēble
is not payede for the sacrament, but for the.iii.
offerring dayes. Then aske I this questian.
Why thei appoint not another time to receiue
it in, then that tyme whyche is to lyttle to bee
occupied in declareynge to the people the right
vse & profyte of the sacramentes, & to instructe
them so, & the y do not receyue it to theyr iudg-
ment, but to theyr confort and quietnes of con-
science, for whych purpose it was first institu-
ted: Undoubtedli (most christia counsailours)
they can not deny but that they appoynt to re-
ceyue it then, because they wyll be sure of it.
Theyr doeynges wyll declare it, though they
woulde deny it, for none may receyue the sacra-
mentes vnles he do fyyste paye the money. And
then, wyth how lyttle reuerence it is ministred
and receyued: euery christen hert seeth & lamen-
teth,

These thynges I doubt not are so euident
and playne vnto you: that it nedeth not to trou-
ble you wyth manye wordes concerneynge the
abuses therof. Many godly mynded men haue
boeth wrytten and preached, & do dayely wryte
and preach, of and agaynst those abuses, wher-
fore I am certen that you haue iuste occacion
and can do no lesse but seke a furder redyes her-
of (whyche all christen hertes do desyre) in thys
present parliament.

But also for the oppression of the poore, whyche is
no lesse nedfull to be comuned of and reformed
then the other: I feare me wyll bee passed ouer
wyth silence, or if it bee comuned of, I canne
scarsely truste that any refovmacion canne bee
had, vnlesse God do nowe worke in the hertes
of the possessioners of thys realme, as he dyd
in

Of the parliament.

In the primitive church, when the possessioners wer contented and very wyllynge, to sell theyr possessions and geue the price thereof to be commune to al the faythful beleuers. Take me not here that I shoulde go about by these wordes to perswade men to make all thynges comune: for if you do you mistake me. For I take God to wytnes I meane no such thyng. But with all myne herte I woulde wysh that no mā wer suffered to eate, but such as woulde labour in theyr vocation and calling, accordynge to the rule that Paule gaue to the Thessalonians.

2. Thess. 3

But yet I woulde wysh that the possessioners woulde consyder whoe gaue them theyr possessions, and howe they ought to bestowe them. And then (I doubt not) it shoulde not nede to haue all thynges made commune.

For what nedeth it the seruantes of the houlholde to desyre to haue theyr maysters goods commune, so longe as the stuarde ministreth vnto euery man the thyng that is nedefull for hym?

If the possessioners woulde consyder the selues to be but stuardes, and not Lordes ouer theyr possessions: this oppression woulde sone be redressed. But so longe as this perswasion styketh in theyr myndes. It is myne owne.

Whoe shall warne me to do wyth myne owne as me selfe lysteth? it shall not bee possible to haue any redresse at all. For if I may do wyth myne owne as me lysteth: then maye I suffer my brother, his wyfe and his chyldrene, to lye in the strete, excepte he wyll geue me more rent for myne house the euer he shal be able to paye. Then may I take his goods for that he oweth

I, iiii.

me

To the most christia asseble
me and kepe his body in prison, tournynge out
his wyfe and chyldren to perishe, if God wyl
not moue some mans herte to pittie them: and
yet kepe my coffers full of goulde and syluer.

If ther were no God, the would I think
it leasfull for men to vse their possessions as thei
lyste. Or if God woulde not require an accōpt
of vs for the bestoweynge of them: I woulde
not greatly garysape thoughe they toke thei
pleasure of them whyle they lyued here. But
forasmuch as we haue a God, and he hath de-
clared vnto vs by þe scriptures, þe he hath made
the possessioners but **S**uardes of his ryches,
and that he wyl holde a streygh accompt wyth
them for the occupyng and bestoweynge of
them: I thynke no christian ears can abyde to
heare that more then **T**urkysh opinion.

The **P**hilosophers who knewe nothyng
of the bonde of frendshippe which **C**hriste our
maister and redemer lefte amonge vs: affir-
med that amonge frendes al thynges are cōmon,
māneyng that frendshippe woulde not suffer
one frende to holde frome an other, the thyng
that he hath nede of. And what shal we saye?
Are we not frendes? Surly if we be not fren-
des: wee beare the name of **C**hriste and bee cal-
led christians in vayne. Yea if wee haue not a
more perfecte frendeshyppe then that whereof
the **P**hilosophers speake: wee are but fayned
christians, we beare the name onely and are no
thyng lesse in dede, For this is the token that
Christe gaue whereby wee shoulde be knowen
to be of hym: if we loue one an other as he lou-
ed vs. Howe he loued vs, is declared by the
wordes of the **A**postle sayinge, that **C**hriste
gaue

John .13.

Ephes. 5.

Of the parliament.

gave hym selfe for vs. Accordynge to this ex-
emple ought our frendshyp to be such, that we
wyl not spare to spende our lyfe for the welth
of our brothers. Not to fyght in theyr quarell
(for Christe bade Peter put vp the swerde in
to his place) but to teach the truth boldly with
out any feare of death, and not to suffer oure
brothers to bee led in erreure thoughe presente
death shoulde insue for so doyng.

Some perchaunce wyl thynke that this frends-
shyp is to be vnderstande onely of the pastors
and shepherdes towarde theyr flocke, because
Christ sayth that a good shepherde geueth his
lyfe for his shepe. Forsoeth if the pastours or
shepherdes onely, were the flocke of Christe:
then myght this frendshyp ryght well be vn-
derstanded of them onely. But for as much as
the Laie and priuate persons, as well of the
flocke of Christe as the other: this frendshyp
pertaineth vnto them nolesse then to the other.

And this causeth me (molte worthy counsay-
lours) not to feare the displeasure of men in
this behalfe, knoweyng for certentie that the
greateste numbze of this assemble are not free
from this oppression that I speak of, and that
it is far vnylike that a priuate persone by no
meanes worthy to be called to suche an assem-
ble, shoulde be fauourably hereade and accep-
ted of them whom God hath called to be coun-
saylours of a realme, and chiefly in a cause tax-
yng & blameyng the Iudges befor whom it is
pleaded. I might well coniecte wth my selfe,
that I shoulde in this poynte be compted a bu-
sy boby, and one that renneth befor he is sent.
But I am redi to suffer not onli al such report
but

John. 10.

To the most christia asseble
but euen the verye death also (if it shall please
the almightie and euerlyueyng God to laye it
vpon me) for your sakes, moste worthy coun-
saylours, and the residue, my naturall brothes
of this noble realme.

Eliae. 58.

And here I proteste vnto you all, that the
same spirite that sent Jonas to the Ninuists,
Daniel to the Babilonians, Nathan to Kyng
Dauid, Achior vnto Holofernes, Judith vnto
the Priestes and Elders of the Jewes, the pro-
phete to Jeroboam in Bethel, John the Bap-
tist vnto Herode, and Christ vnto the Jewes:
wytneffeth wyth my conscience, that I renne
not vnscnt. For euen the same spirit that sayd
vnto Eliae, crye and seale not, declare vnto
my people theyr wyckednes: cryeth also in my
conscience, bydyng me not spare to tell the pos-
sessioners of this realme, that vnlesse they re-
pente the oppression wherewith they bere the
poore comons, and shew theselues through loue
to be brothers of one father & members of one
body wyth them: they shal not at the laste daye
enherite wyth them the kyngdom of Christe &
eldest sonne of God the father, whych hath by
his worde begotten hym many brothers & co-
heritours in his kyngdom. Vnlesse, I saye, the
possessioners of this realme wyll repent the vi-
olence don to the poore and neddy meembres of the
same, and become as handes, ministryng vnto
euery membre hys necessities: they shal at the
daye of theyr accompt, be bound hand and fote
and cast into vtter dacknes, wher shal be wep-
yng, wealyng, and gnashyng of teeth, that is,
dolour and payne, the greatnes wherof canne
not be expressed wyth tonge nor thought wyth
herte.

Of the parliament.

herte. And thys much moze sayeth the spirite.
Unlesse ye purge your selues of this bloude, & **Elate. 59.**
stop the mouthes of the poze that the voyce of
theyr complayne come not vnto myne eares: I
wyl not prospere your counsailes in the refoz
macions of those abhominacions which I shew-
ed vnto you, but wyl leaue you to y^e spirite of
errour, y^e prince of thys worlde, whose dearlin-
ges ye are so longe as ye seke not the welth of
the neddy, but your owne priuate commoditie.
These thynges hath the spirite of God spokē.
Heauen and earth shal perishe, but the wordes
of the spirite shal not perishe, but be fulfilled.
Nowe herken you possessioners, and you rich
men lyfte vp your ears, ye stewards of the Lord
marke what complayntes are layede agaynste
you in the hygh court of the lyueynge God.
Lorde (sayeth the Prophete) hast thou forsa-
ken vs: doest thou hyde thy selfe in the tyme of
our trouble? Whylse the wycked were proud
the poze man is afflicted and troubled. Would
to God the wicked myght feale the same thin-
ges that they inuent for other. For the sinner
prayseth hym selfe in the despyres of hys soule,
and he extolleth and sette forth the couetouse
man. He prouoketh the Lorde and is so proud
that he wyl not seke hym. He neuer thynketh
vpon God. His wayes be despyled at all tymes.
He loketh not vpon thy iudgment: Lorde, he
wyl reuenge hym vpon all hys enemies.
He thynketh thus wyth hym selfe, I wyl not
remoue frome one generation vnto an other
wythout mischiefe. His mouth is full of male-
diction and euill reporte, fraude & deceyte: and
vnder his tonge is affliction and iniquitie.

He

To the most christia asseble

He lyeth in wayte wyth the richemen of the
villages or graynges, in secreete corners, to the
intent to slea þe innocent. Hys eyes are fyered
vpon the poze, he layeth awayte, even as a ly-
on in his denne. He layeth a wayte to take the
poze man by force, and when he hath gotten
him within hys reach, then wyll he take hym
violentlye. In hys net will he ouerthrowe the
poze, and through hys strength shall the multy-
tude of the oppressed be ouer charged and fall.
For in his herte he sayeth, God hath forgotten
God turneth a waye hys face, and wyll neuer
regarde the oppression of the poze .et c. to the
ende of the same psalme.

Esaie .5. What sentence (thinke you) wyll the Lorde
geue vpon this euidence? No doubt (most woz-
thy counsellors) even the same that we reade
in Esaie the Prophet. I looked for iudgment
and rightouse dealeynge amongeste my people
and beholde there is iniquitie, I looked also for
iustice, and beholde ther is an outerye. Wo be
vnto you therefore, that do ioyne house vnto
house, & couple one felde to an other, so longe
as there is any grounde to be had. Thinke you
that you shal dwel vpon the earth alone? The
Lorde of hostes (sayth the prophete) hath spo-
ken these wordes vnto me. Manye large and
goodlye houses, shall be deserte, & without in-
habitanter. .x. acres of wyne shall yelde but
one quarte of wine, and .xxx. bushelles of sede
shal yelde but .x. bushelles agayne. Beholde
you engrossers of fermes, and teynments be-
holde I saye, the terrible threatnynges of God
whose wyath you can not escape. The voyce
of the poze (whō you haue with money thruste
out

Of the parliament.

out of house and whome, is well accepted in the eares of the Lorde. and hath steared vp hys wrath agaynste you. He threateneth you most horrible plagues. Ten acres of vynes shal yelde but one quarte of wyne, and .xxx. bushelles of sede but .x. bushelles agayne. The sede of gods worde sown in youre herres, shal be bare rayne and not bringefourth fruite.

For couetous, the rote of all puelles, occupieth that ground so that the heauenlie sede can bi no meanes geue encrease. This is a plague of al plagues most horryble. And doubt ye not, you lease mongers, that take groundes by lease to the entente to lette them out agayne for double and tryple the rent: your parte is in this palge. The Lorde shall take his spirite from you. He shall forbyd the cloudes of hys mercy, to rayne vpon you wyth the swete dwe of hys grace. And you surneighers of lādes, that of .x. li. lāde can make .xx. you shall not be forgotten in the effusion of thys plage.

For when you haue multiplied your renttes to the higheste, so that ye haue made all your tenantes your slaues to labour and toyle and bringe to you all that maye be plowen and digged out of youre groundes: then shall death sodaynly strike you, then shall God wythdrawe his comfortable grace from you, then shall your conscience prycke you, then shall you thynke with desperat Cain, that your sinne is greater then that it may be forgotten. For your owne conscience shall iudge you worthe no merce, because you haue shewed no mercy. Yea the same enemie that hath kended, and doeth yet mayne rayne in you thys mischeuouse, outragiouse
and

To the most christiā assemblē
and vnfaciable couetousnes: Shall then bee as
busy to put you in mynde of the wordes of
Christ saenge, & same measure that you haue
made vnto other, shalbe nowe made vnto you.

You haue shewed no mercye: howe can you
than loke for mercie? Oh noble counsaillours,
be mercyfull to your selues. Destroye not your
owne soules to enriche your heires. Enlarge
not your earthly possession wth the losse of
the eternall inheritaunce. Learne to knowe the
estate that God hath called you vnto, & to lyue
accordinge to your profession, Know that you
are al ministres in the common weale, and that
the porcion which you are borne vnto, or that
your prince geueth you is your estate. Knowe
that your office is to distribute & not to scrape
together on heapes. God hath not sette you to
surueye hys landes, but to playe the stuardes
in his householde of this world, and to se that
your poore felow seruantes lacke not theynes
cessaries.

Consider that you are but ministers and ser-
uauntes vnder the Lorde oure God, and that
you shal render a streyght accompt of your ad-
ministracion. Stand not to much in your own
conceyte, gloryng in the worthynesse of your
bloude, for we are all one mans chyl dren, and
haue (by nature) lyke ryght to the richesse and
treasures of thys worlde whereof oure natu-
ral father Adame was made Lord and Kinge.
Which of you can laye for hym selfe any na-
turall cause whye he shoulde possesse the treas-
sure of this worlde, but & the same cause may
be founde in hym also whome you make your
Haue? By nature (therefore) you can claime no
thyng

FH

MVSEVM

Of the parliament.

thinge but that whiche you shall gette with the sweate of your faces. That you are Lordes and gouernours therfore, commeth not by nature but by the ordinaunce & appoyntment of God. Knowe then that he hath not caused you to the welthe and glozie of this worlde: but hath charged you wth the greate and rede multitude.

And if any of them perishe thoro^we your defaulte, knowe the^e for certentye, that the bloude of them shalbe required at your handes. If the impotent creatures perishe for lacke of necessities: you are the murderers, for you haue they^r enheritaunce and do not minister vnto them.

Ezech. 33.

If the sturdy fall to stealeynge, robbynge & reueynge: then are you the causers therof, for you dygge in, enclose, and wythholde from them the earth out of the whych they shoulde dygge and plowe they^r lyueynge. For as the Psalmiste wyrteth. All the heauen is the Lordes: but as for the earth hee hath geuen to the chyldrene of men.

Psalm. 113.

The whole earth therfor (by birth ryght) belongeth to the chyldren of men. They are all inheritous therof indifferently by nature.

But because the sturdy shoulde not oppresse the weake and impotent: God hath apoynted you stuards to geue meate vnto his housholde in due season. And if you be founde fay^r hfull in this littel: then knowe that he wyl^l preferre you to muche greater thinges. But if ye bee founde oppressing your felowe seruaunts: the^e knowe for certentie, that the Lorde your master shall at hys comeynge, rewarde you wth many stryppes. Call to your remembraunce the History of kynge Nabuchodonosor: whose for
his

Luke. 12.
Daniel. 4.

To the most christia asseble
his presumption became as a brute beast, fea-
dyng upon grasse and hee as other beastes dyd.
Consyder Pharaao with his great armie, who
the Lord overwhelmed in the red sea for oppre-
ssyng and persecutynge his people. Yea consi-
der all the nobilitie that haue possessed the erth
euen from the begynnyng: and then saye howe
you see theyr successours, & by what title you
may cleyme that which was theyrs.

Many hundred yeres sence, the noble Ro-
mans helde all Europa and parte of Affrike
and Asia, in quiete possession: and where are
they that succeade them in theyr impiet?
The brutish Gothes invaded and vanquish-
ed the impiet of Rome: and wher are theyr suc-
cessours?

What shoulde I stande in the rehersale
of the greate possessioners that haue hertofore
possessed the erth, whose lynial descent can not
be founde? It shall suffice me to remyt you to
the wordes of the Lorde vnto Nabuchodonos-
sor, whyche are writen in the booke of Daniel
the Prophete.

Ther shall you learne that it is God that
geueth the impiere to whome it pleaseth hym,
and that all powre is from aboue, accordynge
to the answer that our sauoure Christe made
vnto Pilate, when he bragged hym wth the
powre that he had to crucifixe hym and to deli-
uer hym. Thou shouldest, sayed our sauour,
haue no powre ouer me at all, were it not geue
the from aboue.

Thus is it euident vnto you (moste wor-
thy counsaylours) that your powre and estate
someth frome aboue, and that, by nature, you
can

Of the parliament.

can cleyne nothyng of the possessions of this worlde, more then that whyche you gette wpyth the sweete of your faces.

I doubt not therfor but that your consciences do condescende and agre vnto that which I haue spoken concerninge your office and ministerie, knoweyng that God hath appoynted you to minister necessities to the impotent and to defende the innocent.

Do not therefore neglect this principalle poynt of your dutie, to seke in this parliament a redresse of this great oppression, wherwpyth the poore members of this noble realme, are most vnmereifully vexed on every syde.

The lande lordes for theyr partes, suruey and make þe vttermoost peny of al their growndes, bysydes the vnrasonable fynes and incomes, and he that wyl not or can not geue all that they demaunde: shall not enter be he neuer so honest or stande he neuer so greate neede.

Yea though he haue ben an honeste, true, faythfull and quiete tenant many yerres: yet at the vacatiõ of his Copie or Indentur, he must paye welmoste as muche as woulde purchayse so much grownde or else boide in hast, though he, his wyfe and chyldrene, shoulde perishe for lacke of harbour.

What a sea of mischifes hath floued out of this more then Turke the tyranic: what honeste housholders haue ben made folowers of other not so honest mens tables: what honeste matrones haue ben brought to the neede rocke and cardes: what menchyldrene of good hope in the liberall sciences and other honeste qualities (wherof this realme hath great lacke) haue

B.I.

ben

To the most chryſtiaſſe ble
ben compelled to fal ſome to handycrafts and
ſome to daye labour to ſuſtayne theyr parents
decrepet age and miſerable pouertie : what fro
warde and ſtoubourn children haue herby ma-
ken of the yoke of godly chaſtiſement rennyng
hedlonge into all kyndes of wickednes and fi-
naly garnyſhed galowe trees : what modeſte,
chaſte and womanly virgins, haue for lacke of
dourie ben cōpelled either to paſſe ouer ſ days
of theyr youth in vngate ſeruitude or elſe to
marrye to perpetuall miſerable pouertie : what
immodeſte, and wanton gyrls haue herby be-
made ſiſters of the Banck (the ſtumblingſtock
of all frayle youth) and finally, moſte miſerable
creatures lyeinge and dyeinge in the ſtreets full
of all plagues and penurie : what vniuerſall deſ-
truction chaūceth to this noble realme by this
outragious and vnſacible deſpy of the ſuruey-
ers of landes : I reſorte me to you (moſte chryſ-
tian counſayellours) which at here aſſembled
from all partes of this noble realme, to cōſulte
for the welth of all the members of the ſame.

On the other ſyde, ther be certayne tes-
nautes, not able to be lande lordes, and yet
after a ſorte they conterfayte landelordes, by
obtainyng leaſes in and vpon groundes and
tenementes, and ſo reſe ſynce, incomes, and
rentes : and by ſuche pyllage pyke out a por-
tion to mayntayne a proud porte, and all by pyl-
ynge and pollynge of the pooze commons that
muſt of neceſſitie ſeke habitations at their han-
des.

That this is true, I report me to my lord
the maiſtre and other the hed officers of the Ci-
tie of London, whoe (if they be not ignorant of
the

Of the parliament.

the state of the Citie can witnes with me that the moſte parte, yea I thinke ix. of the .x. partes, of the houſes in London, bee let and let by them that haue them by leaſe: and not by the owners.

Howe that polle the poore tenantes, would ſone be tryed, if they leaſes were conferred wth they rentrolles. It is not to be thought contrary but that the greate leaſmūgers haue greate gains by theſe leaſes, for the little ones that hold but a piece of houſeing of .xx. or .xxx. s. by yere: can ſynde the meanes to holde and dwell vpon the chiefe parte thereof rent free, by letynge out the reſidue for the whole yere rent.

I thinke not contrary but theſe thinges do appeare in the ſyght of many to bee but better trifles, and not worthy to be ſpoke of in ſo noble an aſſemble as this moſt honorable parliament. For they are no matters concernyng the welth of the nobilitie, yea it is rather hyndrance to many of them, to haue theſe thynges redreſſed, then any encrease of they welth. Yea euen you (moſte chriſtian counſaylours) wherch are hert assembled, to debate the weightie matters of this realme: are not all ſo free from this kynde of oppreſſion, but that you coulde be well contented to wryncke at it. And therfor, for aſmuch as the inordinate loue of men towarde them ſelues is ſuch, that eyther they can not ſe theyrowne faults, or elſe if they do ſe them, or be tolde of them, they take them not to be ſo great as they are in dede: I thinke it no meruayle, though ſuch of you (moſt worthy counſaylours) as haue any profite by this oppreſſion, do wthin them ſelues decide and

B.ii. laugh

To the most christiaⁿ asse^mble
laugh to scoone my sole hardines and rashe en-
terpryse herein, knoweynge that it is not the
vse of them that bee assembled to the intent to
establishe such thynges as shall be for the welth
of a whole realme: to condescende and agree to
those thynges whych shall be disprofitable vnto
to the chiefe membres of the same.

Truth it is (molte worthy counsaillours)
I myght well and worthily be laughed at: if I
woulde attempte any suche thyng. But the
thyng that hytherto I haue spoken of: is not
to the disprofite of any, but to the greate com-
moditie and profite of all the whole realme.

For what discomoditie is it to þ^r heade, shoul-
ders, the armes, and other the vpper membres
of the body, beyng all redy sufficiently cloth-
ed: to put on the legges & feete a peare of hose
and shoes, to defende them also from the in-
uries of the wether and other hurtes that might
chaunce vnto them in they^r trauallynge to car-
ry the body from place to place, for hys com-
ditie and pleasure: Verily in myne opiniō, that
body is far vnworthy to haue either legges or
feete: that wyll lette them goe bare, haueynge
wherewith to couer them.

Euen so you, beyng the chiefe membres
of this noble realme, and hauing in your han-
des the wonderful and incomparable riches of
the same: what shoulde it greue you to departe
wyth some porcion therof, that the inferioure
membres therof, may at all tymes bee able to
do they^r ministerie and office accordyngly.

Once remembre, that as the body wyth-
out the inferiour partes is but lame and as a
blocke vnweldy, and muste, if it wyll remoue
from

Of the parliamēt.

frome place to place, creepe vpon the handes: euen so you, if ye had not the poze membres of this realme to tyll the grounde and doe your other droudgerp: no remedy you must nedes do it your selues.

Use them therfore as the necessarie membres of the mystical body of this most noble realme, and be not in this poynt moꝝ vnnatural then the heathen Philosophers were.

They in theyꝝ wyttynge declare no lesse then I haue here wytten.

This ought not a lytle to moue you, being christians whose redemer Jesu Christ sitteth at the right hande of God his father, to study, not onely to be equale wyth, but to pas the heathen and vnchristened in this mattier, euen as farre as the excellencie of the name and religion which we professe, passeth theyꝝ.

Remembre (most christian counsaylours) that you are not onely naturally membres of one bodi with the poze creatures of this realme: but also by religion you are membres of the same mysticall body of Christe, whose is the heade of vs all (his membres) and esteemeth all that is done to the lesse of vs his membres, as done to hym selfe. For he sayeth.

What so euer ye do to one of the lest of these litleons that beleue in me: ye doe it vnto me. If you therfore, neither wil your selues oppress our sauour Christe in his membres, nor suffer other to do it: saye not to synde a redres of this greate oppression whych I haue declared to the same ende. And the I doubt not but God shall so worke wyth you: that euerie mā shall wyllpyngely embrace a reformation of all

Mat. 25.

B.iii. matters

To the most christia assemble
matters of religio. For the spirit of God shall
dwell in you and in vs all, and Christe himself
(as he hath promised) shall bee in the myddes a
monge you. Wher as contrariwise, if you suf
fer our loueing saviour thus to be oppressed,
he wyl forsake you, he wyl leaue you to the
spirite of error. Your reformacions shal take
no place. All your diuises shall be abhominable
in his syght, because ye haue not purged your
handes from the bloude of this oppression.

Let the decrees whych were established in thys
place by a parliament assembled for a lyke pur
pose: be your presidēt, not to folow, but to be
ware by them that ye establiish not the lyke.

The intent of that assemble was nolesse to re
form the abuses of our religion then thys is.
But because Christe was not deliuered from
oppression: he woulde not be amonge them.

1. Epist. 4 They were not congregated in hys name, but
rather agaynste hym and hys doctrine, for he
hym selfe is dear loue, & (as his Apostle John
writeth) wher this dear loue is not, ther is not
he. Thys thyng is well proued by the pro
ceedynges in the same Parliament. For they
established articles euen directly agaynst Gods
worde forbedyng to mary, and comaundyng
to put asunder those that God hath loyned to
geither

If you wyl call these articles into que
stion agayne (as in dede you haue iuste occasi
on to do) I doubt not but you shal be fully per
swaded that they proceeded of the spirit of er
roure and not of the spirite of God, because
the charitie of God was not amonge them in
that assemble.

Other

Of the parliament,

Other thynges therbe wherby the poze mēbres of Chryste in thys noble realme, are oppressed, wherof I haue made no mention, partely because I am loth to offende wyth the multitude of my rude wordes, & partely for that I know you can not seke for a redyes of these thynges wherof I haue spoken: but the other will offer them selues vnto you. I meane the greate Extortion and Usurie that reigneth frely in thys realme, and seme to be authorisid by Parliament wythin these .iij. yerres laste paste.

The Cleargie of the Citie of London, haue for theyr parte optayned by Parliament, authoritie to ouertenthes euen after the exem- of the landloides and leasemongers, and maye by the vertue of the acte requir for double rentes, double tenthes. If the rent of any kynde of housyng or grounde wythin the Citie of Lō- don be raised (as ther is in dede veri much) fro .x.s. to .xx.s: than may the persone whoe had be fore but xvi.d.ob. by the vertu of this act, de- maunde .ii.s. ix.d. the double Bylydes this, the exactions that they take of the poze cōmons, is to much beyonde al reason and conscience. No couple can be married, but these mē must haue a dutie, as they cal it. No woman may be purifi- ed, but they and theyr ydle ministers must haue some duties of hir. None cā be buried, but they wyl haue a shyls. Not thre monethes before I begynnyng of this presēt Parliament: I had iust occacion to be at the paymēt of this dutie for I buryng of an honest poze man, whose frēdes wer willyng to haue hys body rcuerēdly layed in the grounde, and accordyng to the custome, gaue warnynge to the curate that they woulde

B .iij. byng

To the most christia assemble
bryng the deade body to the church: despyng
hym that he wolde do hys dutie and to be ther
to receyve it and, accordyng to the custome, to
laye it in the grounde. But this Rauen smelle
ydge the carion: coude not but reveile it to the
other carion byrdes of the same church, and so
woulde needes come all together in a flocke to
fetch ther praye, wyth crosse and holy water
as they were wont to do, not wythstandyng
the bynges Injunctions and late visitation.
The frendes of the deade man refused all this
and required to have no mo: but the commune
cossen to put the bodye in, agreyng to paye to
the keeper therof hys accustomed dutie, and in
lyke maner to the graue maker and the four
poore men to cary the bodye, so that the whole
charges had ben but. vii. d.

But when the corps was buried, wyth-
out other crosse or holy water sticke, Dirige or
Masse, wyth prayers of as small deuotion, as
any poore curate could saye, yet must we nedes
paye. vii. d. more. That is to saye. i. d. to the cu-
rate, which he called an heade pedye, and. vi. d.
to. ii. clarkes that we had no nede of.

This was done in Sepulchres parrys
in the Citie of London, And if it shall please
any of thys noble assemble to trye the trueth of
this: I wyll verifie it where so ever I shall be
called, even in the presence of all the ydle mini-
sters of the same church.

This haue I written (most worthy cou-
sailours) to geue you occasion to set suche an
ordre in this and suche other thynges, that ey-
ther we may haue ministers founde vppon the
rethes that we paye yerkly to the churches: other
els

Of the parliament,

els that it may be leasfull for vs to do such ministeries our selues, and not to be thus constrained to feede a sorte of carion crows, whypche are neuer so mery as when we lament the losse of our frendes.

This much haue I spoken of the extortion that reigneth freely in the Clergie. Nowe, with your paciēce, I wil w like breuitie, speak of the great and intollerable Usurie, whypch at this date, reigneth so freely this realme ouer al, and chiefly in the Citie of London: that it is takē for most leasful gaines. Yea it is, welmost heresie to reprove it, for men saye it is allowed by Parliament. Well. The most parte, I am sure, of this most Godly assemble and parliament: do knowe þ the occasion of the acte that passed here concernynge Usurie: was the vnsatisfiable desyre of the Usurers, whoe coulde not be contented wyth Usurie, vnlesse it wer vnrasonable muche. To restrayne thys greedy desyre of theys therfore, it was communed and agreed vpon, and by thauthoritie of Parliament, decreed: that none should take aboue .x. li. vi pcre, for the lōne of an. L. li.

Alas þ euer any christian assēble shoulde bee so voyde of Gods holy spirit, þ they shoulde allowe for leasfull: any thyng that Gods wyde forbedeth. Be not abashed (most worthy counsaylours) to call this act into questian agayne.

Scan the wordes of the Psalmist concerning this mattier. Lord, sayeth he, who shal enter in to thy tabernacle, and who shal rest in thy holy mountaine: He answereth. That entreth wout spot & worketh righte. That speaketh truth in his herte, & hath not deceyued w his tonge, that

hath

Psalm. 14.

To the most christia asseble
hath done his neybour no harme, nor accepted
any reproch against his neibour. He regardeth
not the wicked: but them that feare the Lorde
he glorifieth and prayseth. He that sweareth to
his neibour & deceiveth hym not. He that hath
not geuen his money vnto vsury, and hath not
take giftes and rewardes against the innocēt.

If you (most christian counsailours) do
glory in the knowledge of Gods spirite, whoe
hath spokē these wordes by the Prophet: how
can you suffer this acte to stande whych shalbe
a wittnesse agaynst you in the later daye, that
you allowe that which Gods spirite forbideth?

If he that geueth not hys money to U-
sury: shal dwell in the Lords tabernacle: wher
shal he dwel, that geueth his money to Usurie?
shal he not be shut out & caste into vtter darcke-
nes? Their workes be contrary, & why shoulde
not they: rewardes be also contrary? If the one
be receyued in: the other muste be shut out. Yea
and you that haue made this lawe, vnlesse you
do reuoke it and establishe an act to the contra-
ry: the Syndegroume, the ouely sonne of God,
shal at the laste daye deny you and saye that he
neuer knewe you. Depart from me, shal he saye,

Math. 7 al ye workers of iniquitie. Scanne the wordes
of the Prophete therfore, and scanne the wor-
des of oure sauoure Christe also, in the bi. of
Luke: wher he sayeth thus. Do you lenbe lo-
punge for no gaynes therof, and pour rewardes
shalbe plētuous, and you shal be sōnes of the
hygheste because he is gentle & liberal, toward
the vnthankfull and wicked.

I am not ignorant what Glosses haue
ben made vpon this place, and howe men haue
wrested

Of the parliamēt.

tested & made it no precept, but a counsaile of our saulour, & therfore not to infer necessitie to christians but to leaue them at libertie either to do it or leaue it vndone.

Oh mercifull Lorde, what maner of religion is it that these men professe?

They boast them selues to bee the disciples of Christe and setters forth of his glorie.

They wyl beare the name of hym and be called christians, and yet wylbe at libertie to chosse whether they luste, to folowe hys counsaile or leaue it vndone.

Our shepherd Christe, of whose flocke they boaste them selues to bee, sayeth that hys sheepe heare his voyce and folowe hym.

And immediatly before, he sheweth, the cause **John. 10** why the Jewes dyd not credyt hys wordes, to be none other: but that they wer not his sheepe.

And doubt ye not (most worthy counsaillours) what so ever he is that wyl defende or teach, that any one lytle iote of the counsailes of Christe shoulde be so vayne ly spoken that any of hys flocke myght refuse to practise the same in hys lyuynge to the vttermoste of hys power: is nolesse then a membre of the Denell, and a verey Antichriste.

For he that despyeth not in hys herte to practise in his lyuynge, all the counsailes of Christe our maister and teacher: shall be numbred amonge the obstinate Jewes, for none of the flocke of Christ, becau. e he heareth not his voyce nor foloweth him. Thus I make an ende

Wryting vnto you (most worthy counsaillours) the same spirit that in the primitive church gaue vnto the multitude of beleuers, one herte

one Actu. 4

To the most christiā asseble
one mynde, & to esteeme nothing of this worlde
as theyr owne, ministrynge vnto euerie one ac-
cording to his necessities. That you led by the
same spirite, may at the lest weye, ordeine such
a lawe that the oppressiō of the pore reigne not
frely amonge them that beare the name of chris-
tians. But if they wyll be styll oppressyng the
pore membes of Christ, after once or twyle ad-
moniciō: let them no moze be named christians
after Christ whom they serue not, but Mōmo-
nistes after Mōmon whose badge they beare.
And this reformation had, no doubt the mai-
estie of God shall so appere in all your decrees, &
none so wicked a creatur shall be founde so bolde
as once to open his mouth against the ordre that
you shall take in al matters of religion. Yea the
verie enemies of Dauid shall do Dimage vnto
Solomō for his wisdom. All the Kynges chris-
tined shall learne at you to reforme theyr chur-
ches. You shall be euen the light of al the world.

But if you let these thynges pas and re-
garde they not: be ye sure the Lorde shall cōfōnd
your wil dome. Inuent, Decree, Establissh and
authorise what you cā: al shall come to nought.
The wayes that you shall inuent to establissh v-
nitie and concord: shall be the occations of dis-
corde. The thynges wherby you shall thinke to
wyn prayse though all the worlde: shall tourne
to your vnter shame, and þ wayes þ you shall
inuent to establissh a kyngdome: shall be the
bitter subuertio of the same. The mer-
cifull father of our Lorde Iesus
Christe, induc you wth his
spirit, that you be not part
takers of these plages.

Amen.



